

Under the Counter: The Diversion and Abuse of Controlled Prescription Drugs in the U.S.

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University

EXHIBIT

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Between 1992 and 2003, while the U.S. population increased 14 percent, the number of people abusing controlled prescription drugs jumped 94 percent--twice the increase in the number of people abusing marijuana, five times in the number abusing cocaine and 60 times the increase in the number abusing heroin. Particularly alarming is the 212 percent increase from 1992 to 2003 in the number of 12- to 17- year olds abusing controlled prescription drugs, and the increasing number of teens trying these drugs for the first time. New abuse of prescription opioids among teens is up an astounding 542 percent, more than four times the rate of increase among adults. Teens who abuse controlled prescription drugs are twice as likely to use alcohol, five times likelier to use marijuana, 12 times likelier to use heroin, 15 times likelier to use Ecstasy, and 21 times likelier to use cocaine, compared to teens who do not abuse such drugs.

These are just a few of the deeply troubling findings of this report, three years in the making, *Under the Counter: The Diversion and Abuse of Controlled Prescription Drugs in the U.S.* It represents three years of intense work by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. The work includes landmark national surveys of physicians and pharmacists, more than 200 interviews, seven focus groups, a national conference on substance abuse and pain management, and a review of more than 2,000 publications. The findings presented in this report represent an extensive and unprecedented analysis of 15 national data sets by CASA's Substance Abuse Data Analysis Center (SADAC).

The bottom line: our nation is in the throes of an epidemic of controlled prescription drug abuse and addiction. Today 15.1 million people admit abusing prescription drugs--more than the combined number who admit abusing cocaine (5.9 million), hallucinogens (4.0 million), inhalants (2.1 million) and heroin (.3 million) combined. For reasons set out in this report, that number underestimates significantly the extent of the epidemic.

VIII. Recommendations for Change

Train Healthcare Providers

Strengthen Efforts to Control Internet Diversion

Strengthen Monitoring and Enforcement to Prevent and Detect Diversion

The U.S. Department of Justice and the FDA should fund the development of model state legislation for state prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs), and provide financial incentives for states to develop and operate PDMPs in accordance with national standards. Such legislation would protect patient privacy, assure physicians and pharmacists access to patient data, provide law enforcement officials with access based on probable cause, provide for interstate data sharing and stipulate specific outcome measures to determine the efficacy of state PDMPs.

Strengthen FDA Regulation of Controlled Prescription Drugs

Safeguard Controlled Prescription Drugs From Children

Improve Treatment for Prescription Drug Abuse and Addiction

Educate the Public on the Dangers of Prescription Drug Abuse

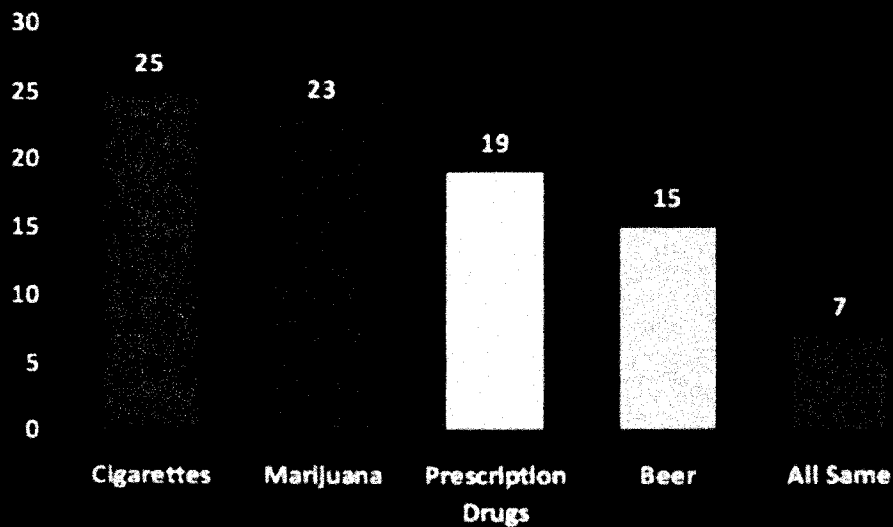
Facts about Prescription Drug Abuse:

- 1 in 5 Montana teens has abused a prescription narcotic
- Teens that are new drug abusers are now more likely to abuse prescription drugs than marijuana.
- Teens report that prescription drugs are currently easier to obtain than alcohol and only slightly more difficult than cigarettes.
- Prescription drugs are the most commonly abused drug among 12-13-year-olds. (NSDUH, 2006)
- Teens ages 12-17 have the second-highest annual rates of prescription drug abuse after young adults (18-25). (SAMHSA, 2006)
- Studies show that the likelihood that a substance will be abused is related to its perceived safety; teens and parents report that they perceive prescription drugs as being less dangerous than illicit drugs.
- Emergency room visits for the abuse of prescription drugs and illicit drugs are now equal and opioid painkillers cause more overdose deaths than cocaine and heroin combined.

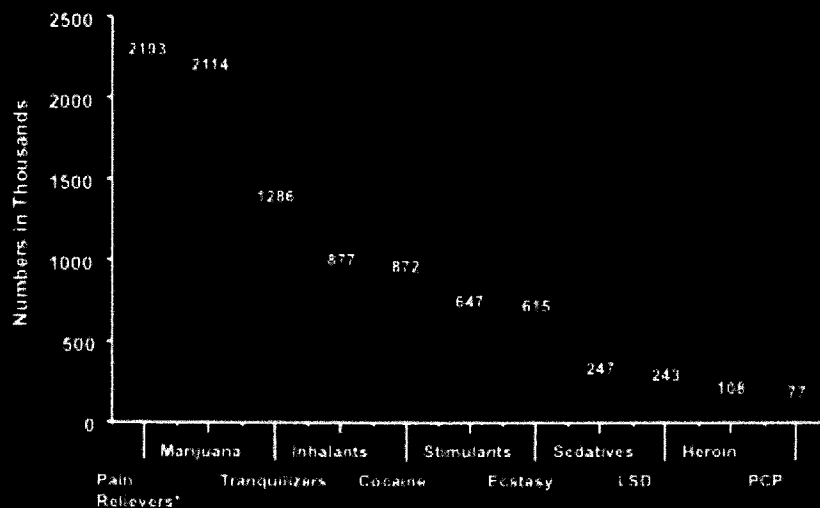
**Table 3. Reason for Using Prescription Pain Relievers:
PATS Attitude Tracking Study: 2005**

Easy to get from parents' medicine cabinets	62%
Are available everywhere	52%
They are not illegal drugs	51%
Easy to get through other people's prescriptions	50%
Teens can claim to have a prescription if caught	9%
They are cheap	43%
Safer to use than illegal drugs	35%
Less shame attached to using	33%
Easy to purchase over the Internet	32%
Fewer side effects than street drugs	32%
Can be used as study aids	25%
Parents don't care as much if you get caught	21%

Which is easiest for someone your age to buy: cigarettes, beer, marijuana or prescription drugs?, 2008



New Illicit Drug Use in the United States: 2005



*526,000 new nonmedical users of OxyContin®

SAMHSA. *Results From the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. DHHS Publication No. SMA 06-0114. 2006.

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